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HEALTH | WELLNESS

Waste of Money or Worth It? Longevity Treatments at Your Gym

Fitness centers get into antiaging, with IV drips, peptide injections and infrared saunas

By [Alex Janin](#) [Follow](#)

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PHOTO: THE COVERY BY THE HOUSTONIAN HOTEL, CLUB & SPA, ISTOCK

Would you get blood work done at your gym?

Longevity-focused treatments like IV vitamin drips, biological-age testing and peptide injections—questioned by many doctors but embraced by a growing group of health enthusiasts—are coming to mass-market fitness centers. Some fitness brands are adding or investing in clinics that offer access to weight-loss drugs, too. The push has the potential to bring once-fringe treatments purported to fight aging further into the mainstream.

Health and fitness giant Life Time opened a longevity and concierge medicine clinic in its downtown Minneapolis location this month, and plans to add others. The Houstonian Club in Texas, a 185,000-square-foot fitness facility with upward

of 13,000 members, opened an on-site location of a longevity and wellness center earlier this year.

Xponential Fitness, which owns boutique fitness brands like Pure Barre and Club Pilates, is acquiring a chain of clinics offering wellness treatments and access to weight-loss medications called Lindora.



An infrared sauna and cryo-chamber sit in the reception area at the Houstonian fitness club's new on-site location of a longevity and wellness center called The Covery. PHOTO: THE COVERY BY THE HOUSTONIAN HOTEL, CLUB & SPA

Membership prices at any of these wellness centers range from roughly \$90 to \$380 a month, with options for add-on treatments, on top of monthly fitness club memberships that can cost between \$180 and \$650.

Proponents say the new offerings are low-risk and fill a need for those frustrated with traditional medicine. Skeptics say some treatments are a waste of money at best and carry the potential for harm at worst. Many lack robust substantiation of their health claims, traditional doctors and researchers caution.

The gyms' moves are an attempt to capitalize on Americans' growing interest in finding novel ways to live healthier for longer, industry professionals and analysts say. In 2022, roughly 29% of exercisers were driven to work out by the desire to live a long, healthy life, up from 20% the year prior, according to consumer surveys from Mindbody, which develops software platforms for fitness and wellness businesses.

Seeing your trainer, then a doctor

Wellness offerings at these clinics range from cryotherapy, infrared sauna, light therapy, biological-age testing, hormone replacement therapy and personalized diet and exercise plans, to more invasive treatments like IV vitamin and NAD+ drips.

The treatments largely fall outside the realm of mainstream medicine and purport to do everything from boosting energy and immunity to fighting the biological aging process. Depending on the treatment, you may be helped by a licensed doctor or nurse, or another staff member.



Life Time's president hopes to open these longevity and concierge medicine clinics in its clubs in cities like Houston, Chicago, Boston and Atlanta over the next year. PHOTO: LIFE TIME

Kimberly Brant, a 23-year-old human resources consultant and Life Time member in New York City, said she would “try anything and everything” in pursuit of her health, including joining the longevity clinic, called Miora, if it opened at her member location. She has already been working with a trainer to build a personalized workout and diet plan.

The move into longevity was a natural progression for Life Time, says company president and chief operating officer Jeff Zwiefel, which has ventured into personalized health services like metabolic assessments, nutrition coaching and even a primary-care effort that fell through in 2021.

People who sign up for the \$299 assessment at Miora answer pages of questionnaire prompts like “Do you feel that your physical appearance is aging more rapidly than you would like?” and “Do you feel there is too much stress in your life?”

That is followed by a blood draw, and a roughly 50-page report that details results for 90 health metrics, from body-mass index to liver enzymes and lipoproteins, and includes personalized recommendations for additional evaluations, diet and exercise, and supplements and medical treatments such as peptide therapy and semaglutide.

Zwiefel says he expects to open these clinics, which aren't exclusive to Life Time members, to drive up revenue per square foot at clubs and plans to open them at other locations in major U.S. cities over the next year.

"We're a company that's always been committed to our members in the community achieving health optimization," he says. "Our personal trainers today can only take our customers so far in that journey."

Luxury gym chain Equinox has also introduced longevity-focused treatments in some of its facilities in recent years, including IV drips, infrared and light therapy, and a brain-wave scan that purports to "optimize cognitive performance."

Questions about effectiveness

Traditional doctors and researchers encourage gym-goers to talk to their primary-care providers before signing up for these treatments, especially the more invasive ones. Risks associated with some of these treatments, many of which aren't FDA-approved or covered by insurance, include possible contamination, interaction with other medications and overdose of a vitamin or active ingredient.

"The bottom line is that there is no strong evidence backing any of these therapies to increase longevity," says Wen Chen, who oversees a branch of research initiatives at the National Institutes of Health's National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. "Some consumers may embrace these approaches, but should be wary about practitioners claiming that they are scientifically backed."

The gyms say these treatments should supplement, not replace, a member's standard medical care. Xponential says Lindora provides its offerings in consultation with experienced clinical advisers.



Stephanie Wolf works out at Life Time's downtown Minneapolis location, where a longevity clinic recently opened. PHOTO: STEPHANIE WOLF

When Stephanie Wolf, a Life Time member and lawyer in Minneapolis, saw the email from her gym announcing Miora's opening, she was intrigued but skeptical. She was glad to see the center's focus would be on preventive health, the same goal that led her to join the gym two years ago. But she said the price tag and a lack of clear understanding about the scientific evidence behind the center's services would likely keep her from signing onto a monthly membership.

"The thing that scared me at first was like, wait, I'm getting a blood draw at the gym?" says Wolf, 28. She added that she might consider paying for the initial Miora assessment, but not before consulting her primary-care team: "Those are the people who I already give my money to for health advice."

Some studies suggest certain treatments, such as cryotherapy and infrared sauna, might provide short-term benefits, including subjective measures of muscle recovery, pain relief or sleep improvement. Several studies suggest boosting NAD+ levels improves health and extends lifespan in animals. Consumers may also feel the benefits of the placebo effect, medical and fitness professionals say.

But it isn't likely to be better than exercise, which a robust body of research indicates is a powerful tool to live healthier for longer.

"People want the hack, they want the pill, they want the magic, and they think that's going to have some dramatic effect," says Dr. Steven Novella, a neurologist at the Yale School of Medicine and editor of the website Science-Based Medicine.

"You're at the gym, just work out."

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